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GROWING AREA NEWS



Floods and Record Rainfalls Temporarily Close Harvest Areas

Governor Locke issued a state emergency declaration for seven western Washington counties after unusually heavy rainfall on October 20 and 21 sent rivers over their banks. The floods and heavy rains overwhelmed city sewers, flooded pastures, and inundated septic systems, creating unsanitary conditions in many shellfish growing areas.

The National Shellfish Sanitation Program directs regulators to close growing areas when emergency conditions exist that might adversely impact water quality. With record rainfall in many areas, we were clearly experiencing pollution conditions that had never been monitored. As a result, DOH temporarily closed thirteen shellfish growing areas between Mason County and the Canadian border. The closures that were imposed ranged from five days to more than two weeks, with the longest closures near the mouths of the Skokomish River, the Skagit River, and the Nooksack River.

We greatly appreciate the understanding and cooperation of shellfish operators in responding to these emergency closures.

Immediately after the floods, we were able to sample the water quality in some of the closed growing areas and the bacterial results showed poor or extremely poor water quality. Samples collected a week or so after the floods showed substantial improvement in water quality. We will be examining data collected during the flood to help prepare for future events.

If you have questions about emergency closures, call Bob Woolrich at (360) 236-3329.

Dungeness Bay Downgraded Again

For the third time since January 2000, our office has had to downgrade a portion of Dungeness Bay due to deteriorating water quality. The first downgrade in 2000 created a 300-acre Prohibited area near the mouth of the Dungeness River. The second downgrade in 2001 enlarged the Prohibited zone by 100 acres and included part of the inner bay. This downgrade closes shellfish harvesting in the inner bay during the winter.

The Dungeness downgrade is the first in the state since the office downgraded part of Henderson Inlet in June of 2001. There are a number of similarities in the two downgrades. Both the Dungeness watershed and the Henderson Inlet watershed are experiencing rapid development; in both areas there is strong local resistance to allowing agencies to go door-to-door to search for pollution sources; and in both areas the largest tributary brings in significant pollution.

The Jamestown Tribe, which has commercially harvested oysters in Dungeness Bay for many years, has been an active participant in efforts to restore water quality and reopen their shellfish beds to commercial harvest. This year's downgrade will reclassify the remainder of the tribal shellfish beds as Conditionally Approved, which requires the bed to be closed to harvest during the most lucrative time of the year (November, December, and January). As a result the Jamestown Tribe has made the decision to abandon their commercial shellfish beds.

For questions about Dungeness Bay's classification, contact Don Melvin at (360) 236-3320 or at don.melvin@doh.wa.gov.



INSPECTORS' CORNER

Annual 2003 FDA Inspection Audit Results

The FDA and the Department of Health Shellfish Programs completed the 2003 FDA Inspection Program Audit, April-June 2003, where a joint review of 13 shellfish dealer operations (SS & SP) was conducted. Over all, the plant sanitation audit was much improved over last year's 2002 audit, showing a 56% reduction in common deficiencies. The audit did point out areas for continued improvement that are as follows:

- Receiving Verification, Section X.01.G 11 out of 13 Dealers debited (85%)
- Shellstock Storage Verification, Section X.01.G 7 out of 13 Dealers debited (54%)
- Prevention of Cross Contamination, Section X.02.C 7 out of 13 Dealers debited (54%)
- Sanitation Monitoring & Records, Section X.02.A.b 10 out of 13 Dealers debited (77%)

Department inspectors will be addressing these issues with all companies during routine inspections to continue our joint efforts for compliance to the Model Ordinance. Thanks for everyone's hard work.

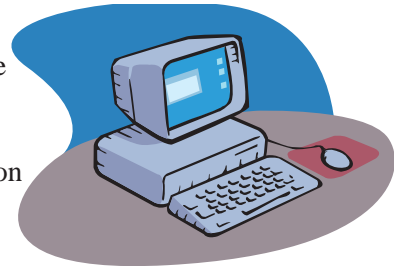
Performance-Based Inspection Program

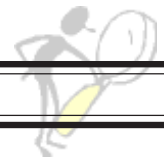
Chapter I.02.G of the Model Ordinance provides for a performance based inspection program (PIP). PIP is a program that rewards dealers for good performance by granting them a reduction in frequency of inspections. To be eligible for PIP, a dealer must have demonstrated a history of satisfactory compliance for the previous three year period. Satisfactory compliance is defined as: inspected at the minimum frequency; re-certification of the dealer; no critical deficiencies, no more than one key deficiency, and no more than two other deficiencies in any one inspection; correction of all deficiencies in accordance with an approved compliance schedule; and no repeat of the same deficiencies. The reduced frequency may be as low as once per year. Sounds great, doesn't it? We've put together a list of the companies that meet the requirements for the PIP. On October 1st of this year the Shellfish Program office implemented the PIP, thus becoming the first state to do so under the Model Ordinance. The dealers that met the requirements have already been notified. To stay on the PIP, each company must continue to meet the requirements of the program.

Any questions regarding the PIP program can be directed to Richard Lillie, (360) 236-3313 or e-mail richard.lillie@doh.wa.gov.

Computer Records

The question of computer-based records maintenance has arisen several times in the past few months. The Seafood HACCP Regulation states in 21 CFR 123.9(f): "The maintenance of records on computers is acceptable, provided that appropriate controls are implemented to ensure the integrity of the electronic data and signatures." Federal regulatory agencies have concluded that electronic signatures and saving the data in a read-only format (so that data may not be changed after the initial entry) are both acceptable methods. This applies **only** to those records that will be the sole legal records for a critical limit: calibration, harvest, sale, etc. In other words, if you wish to keep only computer-based records for your HACCP process, you must use either electronic signature verification or a read-only format to preclude tampering. If, on the other hand, you use your computer data/records and still maintain hard copy records with actual initials and signatures (as applicable) for the inspector to see, then you may use databases, commercial software, password-protected access, or any other way you wish to maintain your records. If you have any questions, please contact Richard Lillie at (360) 236-3313 or e-mail richard.lillie@doh.wa.gov.





INSPECTORS' CORNER (*continued*)

Special Hong Kong Visit

DOH and the PCSGA hosted a special visit of two representatives from Hong Kong in July 2003. The purpose of their visit was to review the department's public health activities and to get a first-hand look at Washington industry practices for both harvest areas and processing operations. The visitors toured Taylor Shellfish Company's processing plant and floating upweller system. They also visited Willapa growing areas with Robin Downey from the PCSGA.



Vibrio Cases Down From Last Year

Despite the fact that we've all enjoyed the warmest summer on record, the incidence of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* has declined significantly from last year, with 7 confirmed cases year-to-date compared to 29 cases last year. Of the 7 confirmed cases this year, 2 resulted from recreational harvesting of shellfish, 4 from commercially harvested shellfish, and 1 from an unknown source. Shellfish harvest areas included Dabob Bay (1 case), Skookum Inlet (1 case), Hood Canal (3 cases), and 2 cases from unknown locations.

Expired Harvest Sites

The Harvest Site Certificate contains information on all the sites that a company is approved to harvest shellfish. It also lists the date the site was initially approved for that company's harvest activity and any expiration date associated with the site's lease or harvest contract. A harvest site with an expired lease or contract is no longer certified for harvest.

Our office will mail out "expired lease letters" twice a year to companies that will have expired harvest sites on their certificate by their license renewal date. The letters will be issued about 30 days in advance of license renewal packets. Please provide us with your updated leases to maintain your harvest sites' certification.

Tagging And Record Keeping – Source Identification (Part II)

The first line of defense for public health protection in the shellfish industry is knowing the source of the product. The classified growing area name and specific site identifier are listed on the Harvest Site Certificate. Growing area name and Site ID, as shown on the certificate, are required to be used on tags and records. This creates consistent identification from the tidelands, through the market place, to the dinner table.

This standardized source identification enables fast and effective investigations of illness reports, polluted area closures, and recalls of specific contaminated products. This use of assigned growing area names and Site ID can prevent delays of interstate shellstock shipments, reduce the risk of unidentified product being destroyed, and prevent the closure of an entire growing area instead of a portion of it.

In the April 2003 issue of *Shellfish Connections*, we introduced an option for your source identification requirements. Companies are invited to assign their own "Site IDs" (a number, letter or name, appropriate harvest site designator of your choice) to each harvest site. You can replace longer identifiers shown on your certificate that can take up the limited space available on shellstock tags such as: the documented site owner's name, parcel, lease, BIDN, or Bed numbers. Once Site IDs are listed on your Harvest Site Certificate, they can be used with the growing area name for tagging and records that will accurately identify and track your product.

The easiest way get the Site IDs added to your Harvest Site Certificate is to make a copy of your certificate, write your chosen Site ID on each site, and mail the annotated Certificate to our office. A confirmation copy of your updated Harvest Site Certificate will be returned to you for your review. To get a copy of your most recent Harvest Site Certificate please call Helen Seyferlich at (360) 236-3332, or e-mail helen.seyferlich@doh.wa.gov.

OTHER NEWS

New Inspector Hired

Bob Ronning joined our office on September 2 as Public Health Advisor and State Standardized Inspector. Bob's duties will focus around the plant standardization program. He has been employed by Okanogan County Health District and has a Bachelor's Degree in Bacteriology and Public Health, and a Master's Degree in Computers in Education. Bob has



begun an extensive on-the-job orientation process learning about department and office policies, accompanying inspectors performing routine inspections, and completing training required to become a state shellfish standardization inspector. Welcome to the team Bob!

Restoration Staffer Moves On

Wayne Clifford, our Non-Point Restoration and Recreational Beach Lead for the past seven years, was selected for a six-month promotional assignment with the department's Office of Health Assessments effective September 15. He is now the Acting Manager for that office's Site Assessment Section and oversees program activities relating to hazardous wastes throughout Washington State. This is a great opportunity for Wayne and we know he will do well in his new role. Congratulations Wayne!

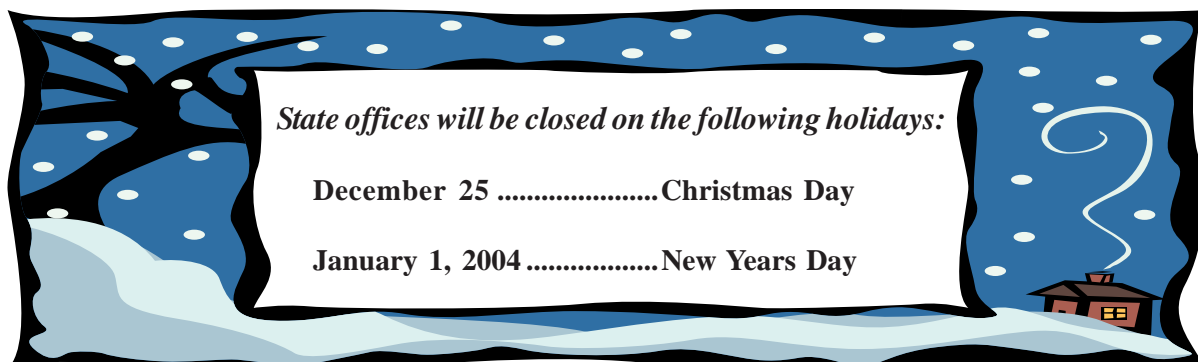


Update on License Fee Restructure

During the PSP fee rulemaking process, we received many comments regarding inequities in the current license fee structure. These comments prompted the formation of a workgroup, comprised of industry members and DOH staff, to look at different methods for determining license fees. The workgroup felt one of the most equitable ways of assessing license fees would be to base a portion of those fees on the amount of acreage certified for each company. One of the problems with using this method is DOH's lack of accurate data on harvest site acreages.

In an effort to update this data, we recently sent a letter to all licensed non-Tribal companies requesting they update the acreages on their Harvest Site Certificate. Once we have this information, the workgroup will reconvene to develop several license fee options to present to industry members for comment.

We are working toward an equitable license fee structure, but cannot do this without your help! If you have not responded to the request for harvest site acreages, please do so as soon as possible. If you did not receive this request, or if you have any questions about the process, contact Jan Jacobs at (360) 236-3316 or e-mail jan.jacobs@doh.wa.gov.



BIOTOXIN UPDATE

Domoic Acid

Second Quarter 2003

The domoic acid levels in razor clams remained high for the second quarter of 2003. Plankton monitoring revealed a slight rise in *Pseudo-nitzschia* cells in the water in April. This was followed by a rise in the domoic acid levels in the razor clams. Razor clam samples at Long Beach for instance, went from toxin levels in the teens to the mid-thirties, dashing all hopes of a spring sport clam season.

Monitoring Dungeness crab from the outside coast for domoic acid continued on a weekly basis due to elevated toxin levels. On April 25, 2003, the Dungeness crab closure that began on February 7, 2003, for the north half of Willapa Bay was lifted. Despite an occasional high individual crab test result, the crab samples for the outside coast continued to meet the criteria for the coast to remain open for crab harvesting.

Third Quarter 2003

The third quarter of 2003 began with razor clam toxin levels on the decline. However, in August the toxin levels showed a modest gain, which was quickly followed by a downward trend to the delight of the recreational razor clam harvesters. Long Beach, Twin Harbors Copalis, and Kalaloch reached safe toxin levels and were opened for three harvest days in September. This was a departure from the traditional fall opening of October. Mocrocks continued to exceed the standard and remained closed. The Department of Fish & Wildlife reported sport harvesters on the beaches in record numbers, estimating 64,000 "digger trips" to the four ocean beaches for three days of clam harvesting. An estimated 648,000 clams were harvested.

The traditional May opening of the commercial razor clam season for the Willapa Spits was delayed because clam toxin levels were reported as high as 88 ppm. The commercial harvest finally began on August 9, only to close again on August 11. On August 25 the season reopened and continued until September 14.

On September 11 a domoic acid bloom was detected in the inland waters of Puget Sound. A blue mussel sample from Fort Flagler State Park, located on Marrowstone Island in Jefferson County, had a domoic acid level of 29ppm. This is the first time a Puget Sound sample tested over the closure limit of 20ppm. Domoic acid levels were detected from Port Angeles to west Whidbey Island and as far south as Port Ludlow. However, none of the other samples were over 20ppm.

PSP

Second Quarter 2003

PSP toxin continued a downward trend during April, May and June, with many area closures being lifted or reduced to butter clam only closures. The only location in the state that experienced new PSP bloom activity was Drayton Harbor in North Puget Sound. Washington State commonly opens the PSP season with blooms in this area of Whatcom County. However, this bloom, which began in the third week of May, was short in duration and Drayton Harbor was reopened three weeks later. At the end of the second quarter of 2003, new PSP activity was still absent in most parts of the state of Washington, following the example of 2002. There was only one geoduck closure in the second quarter.

BIOTOXIN UPDATE (*continued*)

Third Quarter 2003

By mid-July, PSP activity began to pick up with a closure of Quartermaster Harbor on Vashon Island in King County. The following week, Dyes Inlet in Kitsap County and Discovery Bay in Jefferson County closed. In the last week of July, butter clam-only closures occurred for the Strait of Juan de Fuca, from Dungeness spit east to Diamond Point in Clallam County and from Three Tree Point south to the Pierce County line in King County. August saw closures in Clallam County, from Cape Flattery east to Low Point at Lyre River and Sequim Bay, and in Kitsap County from Point No Point to Jefferson Head. The closure for Dyes Inlet was lifted at the end of August. The first two weeks of September saw a spectacular PSP bloom close the Port Gamble to Port Ludlow area. Mussels at Port Ludlow reached 1000 micrograms and geoduck clams at Port Gamble hit a new record for PSP toxin in geoducks at 3,414. This closed two Port Gamble Area tracts and initiated a commercial geoduck recall. In all, 36,492 pounds of geoduck clams were recalled. The bloom extended from Oak Bay south into Hood Canal, which was closed from Foulweather Bluff to the Hood Canal Bridge in Kitsap County and to Brown Point in Jefferson County. Mats Mats Bay was also closed. By the end of September, the closure in King County from Three Trees Point south to the Pierce County line, the butter clam-only closure in Bellingham Bay in Whatcom County, and the Point No Point south to Jefferson Head closure in Kitsap County were lifted. The all-species closure for Quartermaster Harbor on Vashon Island in King County was reduced to a butter clam-only closure as well. The rest of the state continued to remain quiet through the third quarter. There were seven geoduck tract closures in the third quarter of 2003.

For more information, contact Frank Cox at (360) 236-3309.

RE: WIRED

FSSP Technological Updates

Now available online!

Commercial growing area maps that show general classification boundaries can be found at ww4.doh.wa.gov/gis/growingareas.htm. Select a growing area from the drop-down list, and click GO. If the area you're looking for isn't listed, try choosing a map from a larger area and use the zoom/pan navigation tools. If you're still unable to find the growing area you're looking for, it may be listed under a different name - contact Bob Woolrich at (360) 236-3329 or e-mail bob.woolrich@doh.wa.gov for that information.



View a list of all commercial shellfish companies licensed in Washington State. The following web site, www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/commercial.htm, has links to both an alphabetical and numerical listing of all Washington licensed companies, their license number, and the growing areas in which they're approved to harvest. These files are in pdf format (a link to the free Acrobat reader is provided) and will be updated monthly. Questions about this site should be addressed to Jan Jacobs at (360) 236-3316 or jan.jacobs@doh.wa.gov.



Got e-mail? You can contact any of our staff with the following format: `firstname.lastname@doh.wa.gov`

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Biotoxin Closures

PSP Hotline (800) 562-5632

PSP Web www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/biotoxin.htm

PSP Maps www.doh.wa.gov/biotoxinmaps.htm

Growing Area Maps

..... www4.doh.wa.gov/gis/growingareas.htm



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